



[4910-13-P]

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. FAA-2015-3970; Directorate Identifier 2015-SW-006-AD]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives Airbus Helicopters (previously Eurocopter France)

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM).

SUMMARY: We propose to supersede airworthiness directive (AD) 2014-12-51 for Airbus Helicopters (previously Eurocopter France) Model EC130B4 and EC130T2 helicopters. AD 2014-12-51 currently requires repetitively inspecting the tailboom to Fenestron junction frame (junction frame) for a crack. This proposed AD would retain the requirements of AD 2014-12-51, change the applicability from helicopters with certain hours time-in-service (TIS) to junction frames with certain hours TIS, and add a compliance time for sling cycles to the junction frame inspection interval. These proposed actions are intended to detect a crack and to prevent failure of the junction frame, which could result in loss of the Fenestron and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

DATES: We must receive comments on this proposed AD by [INSERT DATE 60 days AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

ADDRESSES: You may send comments by any of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking Docket: Go to <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the online instructions for sending your comments electronically.

- Fax: 202-493-2251.

- Mail: Send comments to the U.S. Department of Transportation, Docket Operations, M-30, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590-0001.

- Hand Delivery: Deliver to the “Mail” address between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

Examining the AD Docket

You may examine the AD docket on the Internet at <http://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2015-3970; or in person at the Docket Operations Office between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. The AD docket contains this proposed AD, the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) AD, the economic evaluation, any comments received and other information. The street address for the Docket Operations Office (telephone 800-647-5527) is in the ADDRESSES section. Comments will be available in the AD docket shortly after receipt.

For service information identified in this proposed AD, contact Airbus Helicopters, Inc., 2701 N. Forum Drive, Grand Prairie, TX 75052; telephone (972) 641-0000 or (800) 232-0323; fax (972) 641-3775; or at <http://www.airbushelicopters.com/techpub>. You may review service information at the

FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 10101 Hillwood Pkwy, Room 6N-321, Fort Worth, TX 76177.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Robert Grant, Aviation Safety Engineer, Safety Management Group, FAA, Rotorcraft Directorate, FAA, 10101 Hillwood Pkwy, Fort Worth, TX 76177; email robert.grant@faa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Comments Invited

We invite you to participate in this rulemaking by submitting written comments, data, or views. We also invite comments relating to the economic, environmental, energy, or federalism impacts that might result from adopting the proposals in this document. The most helpful comments reference a specific portion of the proposal, explain the reason for any recommended change, and include supporting data. To ensure the docket does not contain duplicate comments, commenters should send only one copy of written comments, or if comments are filed electronically, commenters should submit only one time.

We will file in the docket all comments that we receive, as well as a report summarizing each substantive public contact with FAA personnel concerning this proposed rulemaking. Before acting on this proposal, we will consider all comments we receive on or before the closing date for comments. We will consider comments filed after the comment period has closed if it is possible to do so without incurring expense or delay. We may change this proposal in light of the comments we receive.

Discussion

On July 24, 2014, we issued AD 2014-12-51, Amendment 39-17921 (79 FR 45335, August 5, 2014), which was sent previously as an Emergency AD to all known

U.S. owners and operators of Airbus Helicopters Model EC130B4 and EC130T2 helicopters. AD 2014-12-51 applies to helicopters with 690 or more hours TIS and requires, within 10 hours TIS, dye-penetrant inspecting certain areas of the junction frame for a crack. AD 2014-12-51 also requires, at intervals not exceeding 25 hours TIS, either repeating the dye-penetrant inspection or performing a borescope inspection of certain areas of the junction frame for a crack. If there is a crack, AD 2014-12-51 requires replacing the junction frame. Those actions are intended to detect a crack and to prevent failure of the junction frame, which could result in loss of the Fenestron and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

AD 2014-12-51 was prompted by AD No. 2014-0145-E, dated June 6, 2014, issued by EASA, which is the Technical Agent for the Member States of the European Union, to correct an unsafe condition on Airbus Helicopters Model EC130B4 and EC130T2 helicopters. EASA advises of two incidents of crack propagation through the junction frame that initiated in the lower right-hand side between the web and the flange where the lower spar of the tailboom is joined. EASA states the cracks were of a significant length and not visible from the outside of the helicopter. EASA advises that this condition, if not detected, could lead to structural failure, possibly resulting in Fenestron detachment and consequent loss of control of the helicopter. As a result, EASA AD No. 2014-0145-E required a one-time visual inspection of the junction frame for a crack and a repetitive borescope inspection of the junction frame for a crack.

EASA revised AD No. 2014-0145-E with AD No. 2014-0145R1, dated June 13, 2014. EASA AD No. 2014-0145R1 changes the compliance time by removing a calendar day requirement and by determining the time accumulated on the junction frame instead

of on the helicopter. EASA AD No. 2014-0145R1 also allows the recurring inspection to be accomplished either by performing the borescope inspection or by repeating the visual inspection.

Actions Since AD 2012-12-51 Was Issued

Since we issued AD 2014-12-51 (79 FR 45335, August 5, 2014), EASA issued AD No. 2015-0033-E dated February 24, 2015 (EAD 2015-0033-E), which supersedes AD No. 2014-0145-E and AD No. 2014-0145R1. EASA determined that an inspection interval defined in sling cycles is necessary in addition to the existing flight hour inspection interval. EASA also acknowledges an alternative method to inspect from the outside of the tailboom. EASA AD No. 2015-0033-E therefore retains the previous inspection requirements of EASA AD No. 2014-0145R1 and allows for an alternate external visual inspection method, which can be accomplished by a pilot, in combination with the internal inspections.

This NPRM would retain the dye penetrant and borescope inspections in AD 2014-12-51 but would revise the compliance times. We have determined that applicable helicopters are those with 690 hours TIS accumulated on the junction frame instead of on the helicopter, and that it is necessary to include an inspection interval defined in sling cycles.

FAA's Determination

These helicopters have been approved by the aviation authority of France and are approved for operation in the United States. Pursuant to our bilateral agreement with France, EASA, its technical representative, has notified us of the unsafe condition described in its AD. We are proposing this AD because we evaluated all known relevant

information and determined that an unsafe condition is likely to exist or develop on other helicopters of the same type design.

Related Service Information Under 1 CFR Part 51

We reviewed Airbus Helicopters Emergency Alert Service Bulletin No. 05A017, Revision 2, dated February 20, 2015 (EASB 05A017), for Model EC130B4 and EC130T2 helicopters. EASB 05A017 describes alternate procedures for inspecting outside the tailboom for a crack at reduced inspection intervals in combination with the internal inspections at extended intervals. EASB 05A017 also specifies adding sling cycles to the existing flight hour inspection interval for helicopters that perform external load-carrying operations. EASA issued AD No. 2015-0033-E mandating the requirements in EASB 05A017 to ensure the continued airworthiness of these helicopters.

This service information is reasonably available because the interested parties have access to it through their normal course of business or by means identified in the Addresses Section of this proposed AD.

Other Related Service Information

We have also reviewed Airbus Helicopters Service Bulletin No. EC130-53-029, Revision 0, dated February 20, 2015 (SB EC130-53-029), which contains procedures to cut out the skin and splice at the junction frame to facilitate the external inspection specified in EASB 05A017.

Proposed AD Requirements

This proposed AD would require:

- Before the junction frame reaches 700 hours TIS or within 10 hours TIS, whichever comes later, removing the horizontal stabilizer, cleaning the junction frame,

and dye-penetrant inspecting around the circumference of the junction frame for a crack, paying particular attention to the area around the 4 spars.

- Within 25 hours TIS or 390 sling cycles, whichever comes first, after the dye-penetrant inspection proposed by this AD, and thereafter at intervals not exceeding 25 hours TIS or 390 sling cycles, whichever comes first, either repeating the dye-penetrant inspection of this proposed AD or, if the area is clean, using a borescope, inspecting around the circumference of the junction frame for a crack.

Differences Between this Proposed AD and the EASA AD

The EASA AD includes alternate compliance instructions for helicopters modified with a cut-out in production by Airbus Helicopters Modification 350A087421 or in service by compliance with SB EC130-53-029. This proposed AD would not.

Interim Action

We consider this proposed AD to be an interim action. If final action is later identified, we might consider further rulemaking then.

Costs of Compliance

We estimate that this proposed AD would affect 208 helicopters of U.S. Registry. We estimate that operators may incur the following costs in order to comply with this AD. At an average labor rate of \$85 per hour, dye-penetrant inspecting the junction frame would require 1 work-hour, for a cost per helicopter of \$85, and a total cost of \$17,680 for the fleet, per inspection cycle. Borescope inspecting the junction frame would require .5 work-hour, for a cost per helicopter of \$43 and a total cost of \$8,944 for the fleet, per inspection cycle.

If required, replacing the junction frame would require 50 work-hours, and required parts would cost \$60,000, for a cost per helicopter of \$64,250.

Authority for This Rulemaking

Title 49 of the United States Code specifies the FAA's authority to issue rules on aviation safety. Subtitle I, section 106, describes the authority of the FAA Administrator. "Subtitle VII: Aviation Programs," describes in more detail the scope of the Agency's authority.

We are issuing this rulemaking under the authority described in "Subtitle VII, Part A, Subpart III, Section 44701: General requirements." Under that section, Congress charges the FAA with promoting safe flight of civil aircraft in air commerce by prescribing regulations for practices, methods, and procedures the Administrator finds necessary for safety in air commerce. This regulation is within the scope of that authority because it addresses an unsafe condition that is likely to exist or develop on products identified in this rulemaking action.

Regulatory Findings

We determined that this proposed AD would not have federalism implications under Executive Order 13132. This proposed AD would not have a substantial direct effect on the States, on the relationship between the national Government and the States, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities among the various levels of government.

For the reasons discussed, I certify this proposed regulation:

1. Is not a "significant regulatory action" under Executive Order 12866;

2. Is not a “significant rule” under the DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures (44 FR 11034, February 26, 1979);

3. Will not affect intrastate aviation in Alaska to the extent that it justifies making a regulatory distinction; and

4. Will not have a significant economic impact, positive or negative, on a substantial number of small entities under the criteria of the Regulatory Flexibility Act.

We prepared an economic evaluation of the estimated costs to comply with this proposed AD and placed it in the AD docket.

List of Subjects in 14 CFR Part 39

Air transportation, Aircraft, Aviation safety, Incorporation by reference, Safety.

The Proposed Amendment

Accordingly, under the authority delegated to me by the Administrator, the FAA proposes to amend 14 CFR part 39 as follows:

PART 39 - AIRWORTHINESS DIRECTIVES

1. The authority citation for part 39 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 106(g), 40113, 44701.

§ 39.13 [Amended]

2. The FAA amends § 39.13 by removing Airworthiness Directive (AD) 2014-12-51, Amendment 39-17921 (79 FR 45335, August 5, 2014), and adding the following new AD:

Airbus Helicopters (previously Eurocopter France): Docket No. FAA-2015-3970; Directorate Identifier 2015-SW-006-AD.

(a) Applicability

This AD applies to Airbus Helicopters Model EC130B4 and EC130T2 helicopters with a tailboom to fenestron junction frame (junction frame) that has 690 or more hours time-in-service (TIS), certificated in any category.

(b) Unsafe Condition

This AD defines the unsafe condition as a crack in the junction frame. This condition could result in failure of the junction frame, which could result in loss of the Fenestron and subsequent loss of control of the helicopter.

(c) Affected ADs

This AD supersedes AD 2014-12-51, Amendment 39-17921 (79 FR 45335, August 5, 2014).

(d) Comments Due Date

We must receive comments by [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE Federal Register].

(e) Compliance

You are responsible for performing each action required by this AD within the specified compliance time unless it has already been accomplished prior to that time.

(f) Required Actions

(1) Before the junction frame reaches 700 hours TIS or within 10 hours TIS, whichever occurs later, remove the horizontal stabilizer, clean the junction frame, and dye-penetrant inspect around the circumference of the junction frame for a crack in the areas shown in Figure 1 of Airbus Helicopters EC130 Emergency Alert Service Bulletin No. 05A017, Revision 2, dated February 20, 2015 (EASB 05A017). Pay particular

attention to the area around the 4 spars (item b) of Figure 1 of EASB 05A017. An example of a crack is shown in Figure 3 of EASB 05A017.

(2) Within 25 hours TIS or 390 sling cycles, whichever occurs first after the inspection required by paragraph (f)(1) of this AD, and thereafter at intervals not exceeding 25 hours TIS or 390 sling cycles, whichever occurs first, either perform the actions of paragraph (f)(1) of this AD or, if the area is clean, using a borescope, inspect around the circumference of the junction frame for a crack in the areas shown in Figure 2 of EASB 05A017. Pay particular attention to the area around the 4 spars (item b) of Figure 2 of EASB 05A017. An example of a crack is shown in Figure 3 of EASB 05A017. For purposes of this AD, a sling cycle is defined as one landing with or without stopping the rotor or one external load-carrying operation; an external load-carrying operation occurs each time a helicopter picks up an external load and drops it off.

(3) If there is a crack, before further flight, replace the junction frame.

(g) Special Flight Permits

Special flight permits are prohibited.

(h) Alternative Methods of Compliance (AMOCs)

(1) The Manager, Safety Management Group, FAA, may approve AMOCs for this AD. Send your proposal to: Robert Grant, Aviation Safety Engineer, Safety Management Group, Rotorcraft Directorate, FAA, 10101 Hillwood Pkwy, Fort Worth, TX 76177; telephone (817) 222-5110; email 9-ASW-FTW-AMOC-Requests@faa.gov.

(2) For operations conducted under a 14 CFR part 119 operating certificate or under 14 CFR part 91, subpart K, we suggest that you notify your principal inspector, or lacking a principal inspector, the manager of the local flight standards district office or

certificate holding district office, before operating any aircraft complying with this AD through an AMOC.

(i) Additional Information

(1) Airbus Helicopters Service Bulletin No. EC130-53-029, Revision 0, dated February 20, 2015, which is not incorporated by reference, contains additional information about the subject of this AD. For service information identified in this AD, contact Airbus Helicopters, Inc., 2701 N. Forum Drive, Grand Prairie, TX 75052; telephone (972) 641-0000 or (800) 232-0323; fax (972) 641-3775; or at <http://www.airbushelicopters.com/techpub>. You may review a copy of the service information at the FAA, Office of the Regional Counsel, Southwest Region, 10101 Hillwood Pkwy, Room 6N-321, Fort Worth, TX 76177.

(2) The subject of this AD is addressed in European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) AD No. 2015-0033-E, dated February 24, 2015. You may view the EASA AD on the Internet at <http://www.regulations.gov> in Docket No. FAA-2015-3970.

(j) Subject

Joint Aircraft Service Component (JASC) Code: 5302: Rotorcraft Tailboom.

Issued in Fort Worth, Texas, on September 17, 2015.

James A. Grigg,

Acting Manager, Rotorcraft Directorate,
Aircraft Certification Service.

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